

## **What Happens When We Die?**

Pastor Joseph Clark – July 31, 2020

“I believe there are two sides to the phenomenon known as death, this side where we live, and the other side where we shall continue to live. Eternity does not start with death. We are in eternity now.”

- Rev. Norman Vincent Peale

And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

- Luke 23:43

“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully”

-1 Corinthians 13:12

A near death experience or NDE refers to a very personal spiritual experience which occurs during a close call with death. It includes multiple experiences and sensations after a person has been pronounced clinically dead or is approaching death e.g., flat lining from a car crash or heart attack.

Not everyone who clinically dies or flat lines and comes back to life has a near death experience. Many do not. Many cannot recall what happened during that period unless through hypnosis. The experiences involves a very peaceful feeling of leaving their body and going to another place, seeing dead relatives, meeting Jesus, seeing a bright light, speaking with God, communicating with angels, or any number of ‘other worldly’ sensations.

The first recorded NDE occurred in *Plato’s Republic* in which a soldier tells of an NDE.

Peter Sellers, Donald Sutherland, Tony Bennett, and Elizabeth Taylor are among a long list of notable individuals who have reported having an NDE. In the U.S., a Gallop poll noted that over 13 million Americans have reported having an NDE. Many more do not share their experiences for fear that it would damage their credibility.

There are various schools of theory about NDE's. One theory, simply put, is that it is a hallucination brought on by lack of oxygen and the final neurons firing in the dying brain. There is another theory, that for some reason we go back to recalling our birth.

Here is the interesting thing. There are individuals such as Dr. Eben Alexander, himself a neurosurgeon, whose brain died due to a meningitis-induced coma and massive infection. During this time, his spinal fluid had the consistency of pus and his brain function-activity was documented as being non-existent; but after recovering he recalled his NDE with complete clarity.

Cardiologist Michael Sabom has documented an alleged NDE in which a woman patient who, during surgery, met all accepted criteria for brain death, but experienced an out of body episode in which she was able to recollect later witnessing the entire procedure in detail, including describing surgical tools which were removed from the room before she was brought back to consciousness.

Dr. Bruce Greyson has documented a very compelling instance of a near death experience in which the patient observed events outside of their body which were later verified and corroborated by others.

Blind people who never had their sight can see during an NDE. In fact, there have been 31 clinically documented cases supported by evidence of blind people who are able to describe in detail, events, people, and objects which they never saw in their entire lives.

Dr. Raymond Moody wrote in his book *Life After Life*, published in 1975, that the majority of people have similar near death experiences, usually, involving seeing beings of light, angels, or being spoken to by God or the Son of God. This happens to individuals of various faiths and it also has been recounted by individuals who are atheists.

NDE's have been documented in every corner of the earth regardless of the faith or ideology of that place. In 1996 an NDE researcher named Arvin Gibson interviewed firefighters who all had the identical near-death experiences while injured battling a forest fire. They described experiencing the same phenomena while in each other's presence. In the non-fiction book *Fireweaver*, May Eulitt and Dr. Stephen Hoyer describe how a group of women who were working in a field were struck by lightning and all experienced a joint NDE which each of them corroborated separately later.

For many, near death experiences provide a prospect of hope as it suggests that we truly are spiritual beings on a temporary human journey. For others, it is threatening, and the concept is attacked by sceptics. However, the sceptics go to no end -as do sceptics who feel threatened by the reality of God- to disprove or find a scientific basis for why we experience NDE's.

Are some NDE's hallucinations?

Possibly.

Are all NDE's hallucinations?

There is enough evidence and unbiased testimony to support that this is not the case.

How do we explain a blind person suddenly able to describe via an NDE what someone or something looks like, hundreds of miles away from them?

How do we explain someone who was brain dead during surgery, able to recount exactly what the surgeon did and what tools they used including describing other nurses and doctors entering and leaving the operating room during the procedure?

Without a doubt there are as many scientific theories established to discredit NDE's as there are supporting it. Interesting that so much effort is put into finding an alternative theory as opposed to accepting that human beings become spirit as Christ told us. Equally interesting is how much effort is demonstrated by some to deny the existence of God.

The Holy Spirit tells us in the word:

Ecclesiastes 12:7

“And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

John 11:25

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,”

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Matthew 10:28

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Revelation 20:5

“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.”

John 14:2-3

“In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Luke 20:35-36

“<sup>35</sup> But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.”

So, exactly what happens when we die? Some will say that you go to be with the Lord. Others say that we go into the sleep of death until Judgement Day. Some believe that we go to a waiting place until we are judged. Many believe that we are not judged if we have already been saved. Specifically, what does the Bible say about our bodily death?

1) Each and every one of our bodies is going to die. **Genesis 3:19**

2) The souls of the saved go to be with the Lord in Heaven. The souls of the lost go to Hell for eternal torment. **Luke 16:19-31** and **1 Thessalonians 4:14**

3) On the day of Resurrection, our bodies are raised from the grave (in a glorious and Heavenly form, perfect and imperishable) to reunite with our soul. The lost will suffer shame and everlasting contempt. **1 Corinthians 15:51-55** and **Daniel 12:2** and **Matthew 10:28**

4) We will all stand before the throne of God for Christ's judgement and receive his judgement on what we have done, whether good or bad. **2 Corinthians 5:10** and **Revelation 20:11-15**

5) Body and soul will be with the Lord forever. The unsaved are then cast into the lake of fire where they will reside forever, eternally separated from the presence of Almighty God. **Revelations 20:15**

So, what can we gather from this? Firstly, we are all going to die. Secondly, we are all going to be judged. Thirdly, we are either going to be with the Lord in Paradise or separated from the Lord in eternal torment. Fourthly, Now is the time to make right with the Lord. Fifth, Eternity has already begun for each of us and we can die anytime. Even in the next five minutes.

“Is your hope in Christ? Death is a reality—but so is God’s offer of salvation in Christ. Don’t put off your decision for Him, because you could be called into eternity at any moment—and then it will be too late.” Billy Graham

Let us focus on Heaven above as we remember Scripture:

"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise"

- Luke 23:43

“We are confident (of eternal life), I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord”

- 2 Corinthians 5:8

In closing, are you doing more for your body or your spirit? Are you collecting riches here on Earth or in Heaven? Are you living for the moment or are you living to ensure that you go to everlasting glory with God the Father? Are you planning to accept Christ in repentance and in faith eventually, or are you prepared to commit your spirit into God’s hands right now if it were to happen? “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

– Revelation 14:13

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